

# **Dr. Gary Yates, Jeremiah, Lecture 29, Jeremiah 46-49, Oracles against the Nations**

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This is Dr. Gary Yates in his teaching on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 29, Jeremiah 46-49, The Oracles against the Nations.

In our final two sessions on the book of Jeremiah, we're going to be looking at the third major section of the book in chapters 46 to 51, dealing with Jeremiah's oracles against the nations.

Remember that the book of Jeremiah is divided into three major sections. In chapters 1 to 25, we have Jeremiah's messages of judgment against Judah and Jerusalem, the warnings of the exile that is going to come, and the destruction that God is going to bring against the people if they do not repent or change their ways. In chapters 26 to 45, we have the stories and the account of Judah's rejection of the prophetic word, along with that message of judgment, which focuses on how many different individuals within the nation of Judah have rejected the word of the Lord, the persecution and opposition that Jeremiah encountered and experienced as he preached the word.

We also have the promise section in chapters 30 to 33 about the restoration of Israel and God's future plans to bring the people back to the land. The third and final section of the book of Jeremiah are the oracles that Jeremiah prophesies against the nations that surround Israel. Remember that in his commission, Jeremiah is called to be a prophet to the nations.

That role is definitely the primary focus in Jeremiah chapters 46 to 51. Remember, we have two different versions of the book of Jeremiah. We have the version that's reflected in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

We also have the Hebrew tradition that's reflected in the MT. In the Septuagint version, which may represent an earlier form of the book of Jeremiah, these oracles against the nations occur after chapter 25, verse 12. So, they're in the middle of the book.

In the Masoretic tradition, they come at the end. I think one thing that we see about the placement of these oracles at the end is that it reflects more the basic chronology of what Jeremiah is laying out. First of all, God is going to bring his judgment against his own people, and then God will bring his judgment against the nations.

As you read chapters 46 to 51, you should also keep in mind the end of section one in Jeremiah 25, where Jeremiah talks about the cup of God's wrath and God's anger. All the nations of the earth are going to drink the cup of God's wrath. They're going to stagger under its intoxicating power, and Judah is included among those nations.

But what's part of that sequence as well is that after God has judged the nations, after God has executed judgment against his own people, Judah, the final judgment and the culminating judgment is going to fall on Babylon. The Masoretic tradition that has these oracles at the end of the book reflects that as well because, ultimately, the conclusion to this book is the judgment against Babylon in chapters 50 and 51, along with the appendix giving us another account of the story of the fall of Jerusalem. You remember as we've worked our way through this book as well, we've also seen that Jeremiah, in many ways, has some pretty shocking things to say about the role that Babylon is going to play in carrying out God's judgment and executing God's plans in connection with this message of judgment that Jeremiah is preaching.

In some ways, what Jeremiah says about Babylon is not just shocking, but it seems to be subversive. He was accused by his own people of being a traitor or weakening the war effort and the resistance against Babylon. When we see the kinds of things that Jeremiah was saying about Babylon, we understand why that's true.

Jeremiah was saying that God had appointed Nebuchadnezzar as his servant to carry out judgment on the people of Judah. One of the ways that Babylon is described in the oracles that are in 50 and 51 is this idea that Babylon is the hammer of the entire earth. Nebuchadnezzar is God's servant.

God has given dominion over the nations of Babylon. The Jews that are living in Babylon are told to pray for the peace of Babylon the way that, in the past, they have prayed for the peace of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar has taken the place of David as God's appointed and anointed vice-regent.

Jeremiah has these subversive things to say about the role that the Babylonians are playing. God is actually fighting a holy war against his own people by fighting with the Babylonians. But remember, Jeremiah is not saying these things because he's simply pro-Babylonian.

Jeremiah is not saying these things because he's a traitor. Jeremiah is trying to give the people a theo-political understanding of what they're going through and a recognition that the issues that they're having to deal with are not political. They're not a military problem that needs to be resolved.

It's ultimately a spiritual issue. Judah's major problem is not that they're having to deal with the Babylonians. Judah's major problem is there's something wrong with their relationship with God.

If they do not turn from their sinful ways, God is going to use Babylon as an instrument of judgment. But at the end of the book, as we come to chapters 46 to 51, the focus on the judgment of God's people transforms into a focus on the judgment of these nations that surround Israel and Judah. As we look at Jeremiah, one of the things we notice in light of other prophetic books is that these oracles against the nations are an important part of the Old Testament prophetic tradition.

All of the major prophets have sections of oracles where the prophet is speaking of God's judgment against the nations. In the book of Isaiah, we have these kinds of oracles in chapters 13 to 23. In the book of Ezekiel, we have oracles against the nations in the middle of the book in 25 to 32 that come right before the extended section where Ezekiel is going to describe the restoration of Israel.

Here in Jeremiah, they're in chapters 46 to 51 in the Hebrew version of the book. In the minor prophets, we have oracles against the nations in the opening two chapters of the book of Amos. The book of Obadiah, the entire prophetic book is a judgment speech against the people of Edom.

It's a prophetic book that's a very short, brief message that, in many ways, parallels the message that Jeremiah gives against Edom in Jeremiah chapter 49. The literary and issues of common sources and things come up in that discussion. Another minor prophet that is an oracle against a foreign nation is the book of Nahum, where God announces his judgment on the people of Nineveh and the Assyrian empire for all of the cruelty and violence that they've done.

So, oracles against the nations are not just a part of the book of Jeremiah. They are a part of the Old Testament prophetic tradition in general. Now, this is part of Jeremiah's mission because he has been appointed by God as a prophet to the nations.

But that does not necessarily mean, and these oracles against the nations do not mean that the Old Testament prophets made road trips and they went out and, I'm going to do some guest appearances in Babylon, and here's what I'm going to let these people know. For the most part, these messages seem to be directed at the people of Israel themselves. They are messages about these other foreign nations, but except in rare occurrences, I don't think the prophets normally went to these places and delivered these messages.

If they did, they probably had to quickly leave town afterwards. Now, one exception to that is Jonah, who actually is commissioned by God to go to Nineveh and preach

there. I think in part, Jonah's resistance to that is, this is not normally the way it works.

Even when a prophet is preaching about foreign nations, you don't normally go there. Jonah's objection is not just the fact that he's going to have to go and preach judgment against them, and they might get angry and not like it. That's not the real reason.

He's afraid that if he goes there and preaches to the Ninevites, they might take the message seriously and be spared from the judgment. Because of the fact that Assyria are the enemies of Israel and of Jonah's people, he doesn't want that to happen. It tells us in Jeremiah chapter 51, verses 59 and 60, that when Jeremiah composes these oracles against Babylon, that he sends a man named Saraiah, who appears to be the brother of his scribe Baruch.

He commissions Saraiah, and when Saraiah goes to Babylon and accompanies Zedekiah there in 593 BC, he commissions him to read the scroll of Jeremiah's prophecies against Babylon, then to tie a rock around them and throw them into the Euphrates. But as he's reading them, if he actually preached them to the people, that's not clear. But the purpose of these oracles against the nations primarily was to speak to Israel and to teach the people of God important perspectives that they needed to keep in mind with all of the things that were going on with Judah and Israel's interaction with the nations during the time of the classical prophets.

All right. Here are some of the major themes and reasons why God had his prophets convey these messages against foreign nations. Number one, it was a reminder to Israel.

It was a demonstration to the people of Israel of God's sovereignty over these other nations. The Lord is not just a nationalistic deity who has influence in his own home territory. That's often the way that some of the gods of these other ancient Near Eastern peoples were viewed, is that they had a specific territory area.

God is not like that. He is not a nationalistic deity. He is not just interested in the people of Israel.

He has a special relationship with the people of Israel. They are his heritage, but he is actually the king over all the world. And all of these nations answer to God.

In the chapter, and I think we see several passages within these oracles against the nations that reflect that the Lord is going to say to Egypt in chapter 46, verses 18 and 19, prepare yourselves baggage for exile, O inhabitants of Egypt. For Memphis shall become a waste, a ruin without inhabitant. Well, the reason that God can deliver this

kind of message against them is that in the verse right before this, it says, as I live declares the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts.

Okay. Why can God announce that Egypt is going into exile in the same way that he could announce that Judah was going into exile? Because God is the King who controls what happens there as much as he controls his own people. The Lord, the Lord, is the Lord of hosts, the Lord of armies who executes his will and carries out his sovereignty.

It doesn't matter whether it's in Judah or in Egypt. Remember one of the reasons why the refugees flee to Egypt and take Jeremiah with him is that they think that this will move them outside the realm of Babylon or outside the possibility of God bringing judgment against them. Jeremiah is going to say, going to Egypt does not remove you from God's territory.

He is sovereign everywhere. Probably the most distant land that is mentioned in these oracles in Jeremiah 46 to 51 are the Elamites. And Elam is a kingdom that is actually to the east of Babylon.

And we don't really see them focused on or highlighted in these other oracles against the nations. But the Lord says this about Elam, hundreds of miles to the east of Mesopotamia, which is 500 miles from the land of Israel and Judah. And the Lord says in Jeremiah chapter 49, verse 38, I will send the sword after them until I have consumed them.

And I will set my throne in Elam and destroy their king and their officials, declares the Lord. So where does God's sovereignty extend to? Imagine the furthest reaches of the nations at this time. I will set my throne in the most distant place.

God is the king. The Lord also again says to Egypt in chapter 46, verses 9 and 10, advance, O horses, and rage, O chariots. Let the warriors go out, the men of Cush and Put, who handled the shield, the men of Lud, skilled in handling the bow, that this is the day of the Lord God of hosts.

So, in the same way, that God could fight a holy war against his own people, in the same way, that he could commission armies to fight against Judah, the Lord is the king who rules over these other nations as well. And I said this I think when we began our study of the book of Jeremiah, I believed that one of the most just practical things that we can learn from reading the prophets and one of the most encouraging things to be reminded of is the fact that the Lord is in control of whatever political situation. The Lord moves the hearts of kings.

He directs them like water to do his will and his bidding. And no matter how chaotic things seem to be in the world, no matter how chaotic things were in Jeremiah's day,

God is absolutely sovereign, not just over Israel, but over the nations as well. All right.

A second thing that I think these oracles against the nations do is that they are a word of encouragement to the people of Israel, that ultimately God would deal with their enemies, and God would ultimately also deliver Israel from their bondage, their exile, and their military defeat. These nations that had oppressed Israel, ultimately, the situation is going to be reversed, and God is going to bring judgment on these nations as well. So as an Israelite, as I'm hearing these oracles against the Philistines and the Babylonians and the Egyptians and the Moabites and all that, I'm not just hearing about God's judgment of the other guys, but I'm also being reminded of how God is ultimately going to intervene to deliver his own people.

Jeremiah chapter 46, verses 27 and 28, again in this oracle directed toward Egypt, the Lord says, do not fear, O Jacob, my servant. So, we have a salvation oracle being given to the people of Israel. Do not be dismayed, O Israel, for behold, I will save you from far away and your offspring from the land of their captivity.

Jacob shall return and have quiet and ease, and none shall make him afraid. And then it says, fear not, O Jacob, my servant, declares the Lord, for I am with you. I will make a full end of the nations.

So why is God bringing judgment against these nations? Not just because he hates foreigners, but ultimately this is to bring about the deliverance of his own people. Zechariah chapter two, verse eight, the prophet says, whoever touches Israel touches the apple of God's eye. And so, Babylon and many of these other nations that had oppressed the people of Israel or the people of Judah, in a sense by doing that, they had stuck their finger in God's eye.

When you do that, God is going to respond. God is going to react and the Lord is ultimately going to save and rescue and deliver his people. So, there's a message of salvation for the people of Israel that emerges out of these oracles in 46 to 51.

A third thing, and again, it was a specific message for the people of Israel. These oracles against these foreign nations ultimately warn Israel or the political leaders of Israel and Judah that alliances with these other nations are not going to save them from whatever crisis they happen to be going through. You remember that Zedekiah, in the final days of Judah as a nation, was hoping that an alliance with Egypt would somehow either buy him time or provide deliverance from the Babylonian crisis.

Jeremiah argued and reminded him, look, that's not going to help you. That's not going to save you. Even if you could defeat the Babylonian army yourself and all that was left was wounded men, they would come back and defeat you.

The prophet Isaiah, during the Assyrian crisis, had warned Hezekiah, woe to those who trust in Egypt and who go down to Egypt because that's what Hezekiah's advisors were encouraging him to do. Let's make alliances. Let's make a coalition.

Maybe if we come up with the right arrangement or the right political coalition, we can avoid this. Again, their promises or their problems were not political. Their problems were not military.

Their problems were spiritual. They had a problem with God. So, these alliances are not going to save them.

We have an interesting reflection of this idea in Jeremiah chapter 49 in the message that's given to Edom. Edom is one of the neighboring countries right beside Judah. They're the descendants of Esau.

So, they have a very close relationship with this people. But in chapter 49, verses 14 and 16, it says here, I have heard a message from the Lord, and an envoy has been sent among the nations. What's significant about that? Well, if you go back to Jeremiah chapter 27, verse three, we read about a conference that took place in Jerusalem in 594-593 BC that again involved envoys from several nations coming to meet with Zedekiah.

Edom that is mentioned here was one of the people that had sent envoys to Jerusalem. The reason that they sent envoys there is that they are meeting with Hezekiah to plan out their military strategy. How do we withstand, how do we resist the Babylonians? Well, God's response to that is that he sent out his own envoys to the nations.

And here's what they say, gather yourselves together and come against her and rise up for battle. For behold, I will make you small among the nations, despised among mankind. The horror you inspire has deceived you and the pride of your heart.

You who live in the clefts of the rock, who hold to the height of the hill. All right, they were sending envoys to Jerusalem, planning how to resist the Babylonians. And Zedekiah is strong.

Hey, wow, the Edomites, maybe they can help me out. Well, God has sent an envoy that says the Edomites are going to be defeated. It does not make sense to make an alliance with people who stand under God's judgment themselves.

The reason why the opening chapter in chapter 46 deals with a message that is directed against Egypt, again, Egypt was the primary nation that Zedekiah was looking forward to being able to help him with the Babylonian army. Well, they can't

help him because they stand under God's judgment as well. And the Lord is sending Nebuchadnezzar to fight a holy war against Judah.

The message in chapter 46 is that God is also going to send messengers or the Babylonians against Babylon to execute a holy war on Egypt as well. So, the purpose here in part, is to warn the leaders of Judah, to warn the kings, that military alliances with these other nations are not going to work. Okay.

The final major purpose of the oracles against the nations specifically is to indict these nations for their violations of God's covenant as well. All right. Israel stands under condemnation.

They stand under indictment from God because they have violated the Mosaic Covenant. They have broken the terms of the arrangement that God has made with Israel and Judah as his chosen people. But as God indicts the nations of the earth, remember, they are not under the Mosaic Covenant.

God is not going to pull out the 10 commandments or the 613 commandments of the law and point those out to the people of the nations as why God is judging them. God is judging the nations, it seems like, because of their violations of the Noachic Covenant that go earlier back into the time of salvation history. The Noachic Covenant was not just an arrangement that God made with the people of Israel.

The Noachic Covenant was a covenant that God had established with all nations. The scary thing, and one of the things that we'll reflect on, is that if the Bible describes this as an everlasting covenant, and if God judged the nations of the earth that were in the world during the time of Jeremiah and Isaiah if God held those nations accountable for their violations of the Noachic Covenant, and if this is indeed an eternal covenant, then the nations today are just as liable to the terms that God set out in that arrangement as well. You remember that the primary responsibility that is placed on humanity in the Noachic Covenant in Genesis 9, 5, and 6 is that there is a restraint placed on bloodshed and violence.

The Noachic Covenant says that God is putting a new system into place that whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. God is holding the nations of the earth accountable for their violence and their bloodshed. When God pictures the judgment of the earth, when the prophet Isaiah speaks of that in chapter 24, verses 1 to 5 of the book of Isaiah, he says the whole world is swaying and reeling under God's judgment.

Well, why is God bringing this judgment? Because they have violated the everlasting covenant. Again, that doesn't seem to be the Mosaic law because that's a specific law, a specific covenant that God has made with Israel. The everlasting covenant most likely goes back to the arrangement that was established in the days of Noah.

In chapter 26 verse 19, in that same context, Isaiah says that in the future, as God prepares to bring that judgment, the earth will disclose its bloodshed. So, what specifically is God going to judge the nations for? Their violations of the Noahic Covenant. In Jeremiah 46 to 51, often the specific reasons why God is judging these particular nations is not always laid out.

Sometimes, there's just a sentence of judgment, but the underlying theology of the oracles against the nations, I believe, is that God is holding these nations accountable for their responsibilities that were established under the Noahic Covenant. In Amos 1 to 2, in which the Lord is roaring in judgment and he goes out like a lion from the city of Zion, the first six judgment oracles there before God turns to Judah and Israel are against the nations that surround Israel and Judah. In that passage, the prophet Amos is going to lay out the specific reasons for the judgment that God is going to bring against these nations.

Sometimes, it's because of the violence and atrocities they have committed against Israel. Our whole principle is if you stick your finger in God's eye, God's going to react to that. God reacts to the mistreatment and abuse of his people.

But one of the other things we see in those judgment oracles against the nations is that they are often held accountable for the atrocities and the violence that they committed against nations other than Israel. So, Amos says in chapter 2, verses 1 to 2, that God is going to judge the king of Moab for his crime of burning the bones of the king of Edom. The judgment, the anger of the Lord, the sentence of God against that king has nothing to do with Israel.

It has something to do with the violence that's been perpetrated against other people. You see the underlying accountability to the Noahic Covenant there. Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 12 speaks of the judgment that God is going to bring against Babylon, and it says, woe to Babylon.

And woe, remember, death sentence, death is coming. Babylon is as good as dead. Why? Because it is a city that is built on bloodshed.

The prophet Nahum chapter 3 verse 1, there is going to be this terrible judgment of the city of Nineveh because of its bloodshed. And from what we know about the Assyrians in history, they were incredibly brutal, violent people, even by the standards of the ancient Near East. So, the Lord's going to hold them accountable for that.

The next two verses in Nahum 3 picture the army that is going to come into Nahum and do the same thing to them that they have done to other people. There's prophetic justice here. So, the underlying theology of the oracles against the nations

is that these nations are just as responsible, just as accountable to God as Israel is, but for different covenantal reasons.

Okay. So that's kind of the underlying theology of all of this. Let's note, before we get into further explanation of what these oracles are about, let's note the nations that are specifically referenced in these judgment oracles that are found in the book of Jeremiah.

Chapter 46, the judgment there is going to be against the nation of Egypt and the Lord is going to bring them down. Chapter 47, the Philistines, and they were neighbors of Israel and Judah, and they had been enemies since the time of the judges. Chapter 48, the Moabites.

Chapter 49, verses 1 to 6, the Ammonites. Chapter 49, verses 7 to 22, the Edomites. Chapter 49, verses 23 to 27, Damascus, the capital city of the Arameans.

Someone that Israel had been engaged in either in conflict or partnership with throughout their history. In chapter 49, verses 28 to 33, the Arab tribes of Kedar and Hazor, not the Hazor in Israel, but what appears to be in Arabia. The Elamites, chapter 49 verses 34 to 39, again, a kingdom that was hundreds of miles to the east of Mesopotamia or to Babylon.

And then in chapters 50 and 51, the final oracle is against Babylon. What do we notice about this list? What we notice about this list is that it begins and ends with a superpower and someone who had been an empire. Egypt, chapter 46, is not the empire that it once had been, but Israel's great oppressor in the past and still a significant player in what's going on in the political scene in Jeremiah's day.

At the end, Babylon chapters 50 and 51. So it's bracketed by these references to these two superpowers. In between, you have judgment speeches against all of the nations that are immediately surrounding Israel.

It reminds us that no nation is too great to avoid the judgment, but no nation is too small that God is going to ignore them either. So that's the list of the nations. When you turn over to Ezekiel and you look at the nations that are mentioned there, the nations that are listed, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt.

And so, with just a couple of differences, the nations are essentially the same. All right, what do we know and what do we come to understand about these judgments as we look at what God is doing in judging these specific group of people? Notice that they're in a specific geographical location. They're in the immediate area surrounding Israel.

And I think this is an important thing to understand about these passages. These are judgments as they are announced on these different nations. These are judgments that take place primarily in history.

These are not judgments that I think are describing for us the great tribulation or the final days before the second coming of Christ. These are judgments that are being carried out in the historical circumstances in situations of Jeremiah's day. In fact, most of these judgments are going to be carried out by the Babylonian army.

All right, the message of judgment against Egypt. Look at what we have here. The word of the Lord, chapter 46, verse 1, that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the nations about Egypt, concerning the army of Pharaoh Necho, the king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates at Carchemish, and which Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, defeated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah.

So, when is this judgment going to take place? This judgment is connected to the battle where Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians in 605 BC. That was the battle that established Babylon as the dominant power in the ancient Near East. But in the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah, Jeremiah had announced the outcome of that battle before it ever took place.

Look, I know what's going to happen here. Chapter 46, verse 13 says this, the word that the Lord spoke to Jeremiah the prophet about the coming of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, to strike the land of Egypt. All right, chapter 46, verse 26, the prophet says there, I will deliver them, the Egyptians, I will deliver them into the hand of those who seek their life, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and his officers.

So, at the beginning, middle, and end of the oracle against Egypt, who's the one that carries this judgment out? Nebuchadnezzar. It does not say, in the days of the great tribulation, I will hand them into the hands of the Antichrist. Or here's what's going to happen: this is a historical judgment that happened hundreds of years ago, even before the time of the coming of Jesus.

All right. We have a judgment speech against the tribe of Kedar, this Arab group, in chapter 49, verse 30. And notice what it says there in terms of this judgment.

When is it going to happen? When is this judgment going to be carried out? It says in verse 30, for Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, has made a plan against you and formed a purpose against you. How is the judgment of Kedar going to happen? Is this again the battle of Armageddon or the second coming? No, it's the judgments that were carried out in Jeremiah's day that were part of that historical situation. So, one of the things that often happens in popular treatments of Old Testament prophecy is that we often go to the Old Testament prophets trying to explore things about

contemporary events or what's going to happen in the world in the last days before the second coming of Jesus.

And often we're looking for specific references. Was this event promised? Is this event in scripture? Is this showing us that the end is near? These passages are not describing the end times. They are describing things that actually occurred in history.

Now there are patterns and parallels here that definitely will be reflected again in the judgments that are carried out in the end times. And we're going to talk more about that. But it really is a faulty hermeneutic to go to these passages and to try to find specific references either to contemporary political events or to things that are going to happen in the future.

And we recurrently see popular treatments of prophecy doing this. And often, it's a good way to sell a book or to make some videos that are going to be popular or to gain an audience, but it's really not a valid hermeneutic. You have to look at the historical context and setting of the passage.

There's a very popular book right now called *The Harbinger* that tries to show that the judgment of America is prophesied in Isaiah 9 and 10. But when I look at the context of Isaiah 9 and 10, it's talking about Israel and Judah in Isaiah's day, 800 years before the time of Jesus. It's not talking about 20th century or 21st century America.

So, these are not judgments that will fall in the last days. These are judgments that are falling and being carried out in Jeremiah's day, in the historical setting of that time. Now, the judgment of Egypt in chapter 46 is described in verse 10, Jeremiah 46.10, that day, the time when Egypt is going to be destroyed, that day is the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance, where God will avenge himself on his foes.

And again, when we hear the day of the Lord, we again are drawn to the end times, the battle of Armageddon, that kind of context. But remember the way that day of the Lord is used in the prophets. The day of the Lord in the prophets can refer to something that is either near or far.

And all of the individual judgments that God brought in history against Israel and Judah, and even against these foreign nations, that is the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord is when God comes down to defeat his enemies. And in the Babylonian invasion, that was the day of the Lord for the people of Judah.

When Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptian army at Carchemish, Jeremiah says that was the day of the Lord for Egypt. Now, sometimes in the prophets, it's really difficult to tell when are they talking about day of the Lord that's near and day of the Lord that's far, but simply seeing day of the Lord here does not mean this is an

eschatological passage. Again, we're talking about judgments that take place in history.

Zephaniah had said the day of the Lord is near. He's talking about the invasion of Babylon. So, I think it's just an important hermeneutical thing to establish here.

And I hope that that doesn't disappoint us. It was like, wow, I was hoping we'd learn some new secrets about biblical prophecy here. One of the other key things that we learned in this section is it's important for us to reflect on why is God going to judge these particular nations. And I think there are a couple of ideas that come out.

And again, as I read these many times, Jeremiah is simply going to announce the judgment that's coming, and there's not really a clear explanation of why. You almost have to have an understanding of the history that may lie behind all of this. But the one thing that I do see coming up again and again is that God is primarily going to judge these nations for their hubris and their pride.

God has designed this world to be the one where he is recognized as King, to where he is the one who is honored and glorified and given dominion and honor. What we have running throughout scripture though, is that humanity is in rebellion against that kingship. Humanity refuses to give God the honor that he deserves.

And many times, they've established their own counter kingdom where they're trying to supplant that and establish their own glory. Man's pride leads him to the point where he even designs and devises his own gods. That's pride.

That's putting your trust in human resources rather than in God. So yes, the Lord is going to judge even the gods of these nations, but primarily, he is going to judge them for their hubris and pride, which really is the foundation and the basis for their idolatry. So, the Lord's going to say to the Egyptians, and here's the description of the pride of the Egyptians, who are like this, rising like the Nile, like rivers whose waters surge.

Egypt rises like the Nile, like rivers whose waters surge. And he has said, I will rise, and I will cover the earth, and I will destroy the cities and their inhabitants. It's a really effective image here.

Egypt views itself like the Nile that floods its banks every year. And Egypt says, in my strength and in my might with my armies, I'm going to flow throughout the earth. I'm going to overwhelm them.

The Lord says you are going to find out the limitations of your armies and the limitations of your strength because God is going to judge your pride. Against the Moabites in chapter 48, verse 7. And as we think about the nations of today, if God is

judging these ancient nations on the basis of their hubris and their pride, think of the accountability that that gives to us today. But God says about Moab, for because you have trusted in your works and in your treasures, you shall also be taken, and Chemosh, your God, shall also go into exile with his priest and his officials.

So, is there any relevance at all to us today about a nation coming under God's judgment because of their pride over their wealth and their treasures? And just reflect, there's nothing in the Old Testament prophets that's relevant to us today, right? No nation ever... Now, this is why all of this really matters. In the same way that God judged the pride of Egypt and its imperial power, in the same way, that God even judged a smaller nation like Moab that we probably wouldn't even pay attention to, God doesn't ignore even their pride and their hubris that's caused them to devise their own gods and to put their trust in their own resources. The Lord says about Moab, chapter 48, verse 26, make him drunk, talking about the judgment that's going to come on Moab, because he has magnified himself against the Lord so that Moab will wallow in his vomit and he too shall be held in derision.

So, you're going to exalt yourself against the Lord. You're going to vaunt yourself up. You're going to glorify yourself and your pride and your accomplishments.

The Lord will humiliate you by causing you to wallow in your vomit as you experience this devastating judgment that he's going to bring against you. So, the recurring thing that's going to be said about these enemies is that the Lord is going to judge them for their pride. One of the other things that's going to bring judgment on these nations is their mistreatment of the people of Israel.

We were just looking at the Moabites. They are going to be judged for their mistreatment of Israel. It says this in chapter 48, verse 27, was not Israel a derision to you? Was he found among thieves that whatever you spoke of him, you wagged your head.

You mocked Israel during the time that they were experiencing a national crisis. The Lord is going to bring the same thing against you. The tables are going to be turned in the near future.

The Ammonites, again, were one of Israel's neighbors to the east of them across the Jordan. Concerning the Ammonites, thus says the Lord, has Israel no sons? Has he no heir? What about Israel's land? Here's the point. Why, then, has Milcom, who was the god of the Ammonites, why has he dispossessed Gad? Did the people of Israel not have descendants to pass their land on? Is that why you and your gods invaded the land of Israel and took away their territory that belonged to the tribe of Gad? You had your people settle in its cities.

They had stolen territory from the northern kingdom of Israel. This went back all the way to the Assyrian crisis before the time of Jeremiah. Here's what the Lord says. Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will cause the battle cry to be heard.

There's going to be a devastation of the Ammonites. One of the people that are judged in this section is the Edomites. Again, they're the descendants of Esau.

They had been rivals of Israel throughout their history. Jeremiah doesn't really talk about the reasons for the judgment of Edom, but when you go and read the book of Obadiah, one of the things that the prophet Obadiah brings up is the Edomites actually joined forces with the Babylonians as they were invading the land of Judah. Their troops were mercenaries that fought against Judah with the Babylonians as they were invading Jerusalem.

Edom, to the south, had used the Babylonian invasion as an opportunity to take territory away from Judah, and that's why there's this angry message of judgment against them. Whoever touches God's people is actually touching the apple of God's eye. So, God is going to bring judgment against them.

So, in terms of lasting theological principle or lasting message that comes out of this, yeah, it's a judgment against a group of people that lived a long time ago in lands and nations that, if we pulled out our biblical atlas, some of us might have a difficult time finding them. But the lasting theological principle that emerges from this is that God is ultimately going to judge every form of human pride. And at an individual level, the pride of an individual who says, I can live independently of God.

I don't need him. It doesn't matter if they're an atheist or a theist. If you live pretending that you don't need God, then practically, you are an atheist.

And that kind of pride will bring you under God's judgment. But for nations that have been lifted up in pride because of their wealth or their accomplishments, their history, their heritage, or their military accomplishments, God ultimately is going to bring all of that down. And the final judgment that God will execute both on the nations and individuals will be a judgment that puts an end to all forms of human pride.

Okay. Now remember the day of the Lord that's being described in Jeremiah 46 to 51 is the day of the Lord that God has in store for specific nations. Isaiah chapter two, I think is talking more about the day of the Lord where God is going to bring judgment against the entire earth.

And here's what that judgment is going to be all about. Isaiah 2:11 says the haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and

the Lord alone will be exalted on that day. For the Lord of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty and against all that is lifted up and it will be brought low.

And so, at the end of this, it says, stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath for of what account is he? So, this message that we begin to look at this and say, these oracles, what do they have to do with us? They're about nations that lived a long time ago. Why should we care about this? The same pride that brought God's judgment against them is ultimately the reason that God will judge all nations in the future. And it's the reason why God is even actively in the process of judging nations today in the same way that he did in the days of Jeremiah.

God is going to put an end to all forms of human pride. And so, I have to look at this and say, wow, maybe there are things in these passages that are relevant. Even if these are judgments that were carried out against people a long time ago, maybe these judgments are relevant to us because God hates human pride.

And God ultimately, in his righteousness and in his justice, brings down nations that are lifted up in pride and that shake their fist in God's face. And I think we see that kind of pride in our country. And again, going back to that quote from Billy Graham, if God doesn't judge America, he'll have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah and in light of Jeremiah to Edom and to Moab and to the Philistines and to the Egyptians and to Babylon, because we're lifted up by the same kind of pride.

Now, we already mentioned the fact that in popular treatments of prophecy, we often try to find references to contemporary events. A question that people recurrently ask me about the prophets is whether the United States is mentioned in biblical prophecy. Can you find any verses? Is there anything about the war in Iraq and Afghanistan? Was 9-11 predicted by the biblical prophets? Do you know who the Antichrist is? Can you give us a date for the second coming? And when I answer the questions, no, I don't know any of those questions. They're like, and you teach the prophets? You need to go back to prophecy and learn some things.

I have looked long and searched hard throughout the prophets. I don't see any references to the United States in biblical prophecy, even in the apocalyptic imagery of the book of Revelation.

Okay. There's a really simple hermeneutical rule that we need to remember. All of the Bible is for us, but not all of the Bible is about us.

And so, these messages are, they're for us. They're messages that teach us and instruct us, but they're not about us. They're about these nations that lived a long time ago, but here's what they teach us.

The judgments that God brought then are merely a preview of the judgments that God will continue to execute throughout history and that God will ultimately bring against all people at the end of history. Another mistake that we often make with biblical prophecy as Americans is taking the promises or things that are said about Israel and applying them to our own country. We're a Christian nation.

We have a lot of Christians and a lot of churches here. So, we're God's chosen people. We are a holy nation.

I think as things continue to progress in our day, we realize how far we are from that. But I think we understand we are not God's chosen people. God is not working through any nation today in the way that he was through ancient Israel in the old economy, not even the modern state of Israel.

God's people are not a national entity anymore. They are the church that's made up of people from every tribe and nation. So, another mistake that we often make is taking prophecies that are given to Israel and applying them to the United States.

God gives a promise to Israel in 2 Chronicles, if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and call upon me and confess their sin and turn to me, I will heal their land. The primary application for that passage today is not to the United States, it's to God's people, the church. And if they will humble themselves, God will bless them.

But there's no guarantee, even for us as Christians in America, that God is specifically going to heal our land. So, where do we find the United States in biblical prophecy? It's not in specific passages, and it's not in specific promises or messages that are given to Israel. I think if we want to find the United States in a general way, the place that we go is to the oracles against the nations.

And particularly these powerful and great empires like Egypt, Babylon, and Assyria. And in the ways that our nation has defied God or demonstrated its pride and rebellion against God, in the same way, that God judged those nations and for the same reasons that God judged them, God will judge us as well. A writer named Julie Woods had an interesting article several years ago about the minor prophets called Assyria as the West.

And thinking about the judgment speeches of Nahum and how they apply to us in the Western world and to an imperial nation like America. And it doesn't mean that we simply make an equation between Assyria and America, and we're bad, and we need to get rid of our armies and all. That's not the point.

But as we look at the reasons why God has brought judgment against those nations in the past, we are reminded that God will do the same thing to our nation at some

point in the future. It's inevitable. And if there is not a great awakening that takes place in the future, that judgment may be right around the corner.

We're living in that kind of society. But the same reasons that God judged those people then are why God has judged nations throughout history and why God will ultimately judge us. So, I don't go to the book of Nahum and say America equals Assyria.

But I go there and I say, in many of the reasons that God judged these proud and defiant empires in the past, God is going to judge us in the future. And if we take an honest assessment of the United States of America, we may not say the United States equals Syria or the United States equals Babylon. But like Peter Leithart says in his book, we probably are somewhere between Babel and Beast.

We're somewhere between that city that defied God in Genesis chapter 11 and the beast at the end of the book of Revelation who declares war on the people of God. We're somewhere in between there. And because of that, God's judgment will ultimately fall on us.

The nations that were judged then become a paradigm of God's judgment of the nations in the future. One of these nations that recurrently comes up, the nation of Edom, Israel's neighbor, the descendants of Esau. When I read prophetic texts in the book of Isaiah that are talking about the kingdom of God or the last days, the judgment of God's enemies often focuses on that tiny little nation.

Isaiah 34, God is going to judge Edom, and then the kingdom comes. God is going to judge Edom, Ezekiel chapter 35, and then the restoration of Israel comes. Isaiah chapter 63, the Lord is a warrior marching back from battle, coming from Bozrah, which is in the land of Edom.

Now, that doesn't mean that God's got a bullseye painted on the people living where the ancient Edomites did. But what it does mean is that Edom, as the enemy of God and of God's people, is a paradigm of the nations that will be judged in the future. The Old Testament prophets remind us of the reality of divine judgment, both for us as individuals and ultimately for nations as well.

Back during the days of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln, talking about why he believed that the war happened, said in part that he believed that divine justice and divine retribution were part of that. He said every drop of blood drawn by the lash shall be paid for or paid with another that is drawn by the sword. A historian by the name of Stephen Keeler, in his book, *God's Judgment*, who does an excellent job of talking about this, said, we've come to a place as a society where we no longer believe that.

Either because of our secularism or our technology that God has pushed to the margins, our different political ideologies, or our idea that God could not, we've lost this idea that God can judge and that God does judge nations. The Old Testament prophets in their oracles take us back to the fact that if God judged the nations then for their violations of the Noahic covenant, then God will judge us. When we steal land from other people, we have experienced God's judgment for that.

When we murder unborn children by the millions every decade, God holds us accountable. This idea of the Noahic covenant seems to be the blood meter is running, but God, both with individual nations and with the world as a whole, eventually enough, and judgment falls. So, to close this out, yeah, we're looking at a section that deals with judgments that happened in history, but they are a reminder to us both as individuals and people from various nations that ultimately God's judgment will come on nations as well.

God's judgment is a reality, and even if we ignore it or pretend that it doesn't exist, it's real, and it's something that the prophets remind us we definitely have to take account of and face up to. Amos said, prepare to meet your God both at an individual and national level; that's something that we need to be more aware of in the culture that we live in.

This is Dr. Gary Yates in his teaching on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 29, Jeremiah 46-49, The Oracles against the Nations.